

David Patriquin, Mar 30, 2021 at Province House, demonstration in support of Jacob Fillmore/demand to impose a moratorium on clearcutting on Crown lands.

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First I want to thank the people next to me, younger and older, Jacob Fillmore and Nina Newington, for all they are doing and for inspiring so many, and across from me, Ron Coleman who many years ago (circa year 2000) laid the foundation for our formal understanding of the impacts of forestry in Nova Scotia.

I want to say a few words directly to Mr. Rankin
But first I want to say a few words about some of the history behind this event and particularly about the role of Forest Nova Scotia

ForestNS is the organization that we have learned so much about in the last couple of weeks and how by creating a fake organization and false narratives, it succeeded in convincing our young premier to gut the Biodiversity Act.

It is not the first time that ForestNS, an avowed forest industry advocacy group that receives large sums of money from Government to administer programs, not very different from the We Charity story, has been involved in such underhanded campaigns.

In fact our being here today, supporting Jacob and OUR demand to protect the moose, and to impose a moratorium on clearcutting has a lot to do with Forest NS when it existed under the name FPANS, the Forest products Association of NS.

On Nov 6, 2010, over 11 years ago, I stood outside this legislature when NDP Natura Resources Minister MacDonell, a farmer & teacher by background, said "We don't really have an industrial forest, a small private forest and Crown land. We have one forest. It's one forest for all of us". AND he promised a 50% reduction in clearcutting on Crown AND private lands.... Yes on those now totally taboo private lands.

That commitment reflected the recommendations of the NRS (Natural Resources Strategy), which involved inputs from over 2000 citizens from all walks of life, through a Voluntary Planning process in 2008/9, and on two technical reports, one by a wildlife biologist Bob Bancroft and forest ecologist Donna Crossland and one by Jon Porter who at the time was woodlands manager with Abitibi Bowater (whose assets were later sold to the Crown).

The precise recommendations were selected from these competing perspectives by a panel of elders: Justice Constance Glubey; Allan Shaw, a prominent businessman; and Joe Marshall, Executive Director, Union of Nova Scotia Indians.

But when the first hints of what was to come came out earlier in 2010, FPANS got to work, and paid a purported 6 figure number of dollars to Robert G Wagner, a prominent Professor of Forestry at the University of Maine, to review the technical reports; his report remains hidden from the public to this day but it was forwarded secretly to Government, the Premier in particular.***

He concluded, “the recommendations on clearcutting, herbicides, and whole-tree harvesting by Bancroft & Crossland were not consistent with the best available forest research or with the principles of sound forest management,” and therefore that he believed “the underlying rationale by the Steering Panel for the regulatory restrictions of these three practices to be based on a weak scientific and/or technical justification.” At the same time, he praised the Porter report.

I was given a leaked copy of that review at the time, and was shocked by how biased it was and forwarded lengthy comments which were made public, to Government.

Needless to say the train had left the station. In early 2011, Macdonell was shifted to Agriculture and replaced by much more industry-friendly Charlie Parker.

Environmental Voters Matter

From then on it was downhill for the reduction-in-clearcutting promises, as we know, and the failure - we might remind Mr, Rankin - to implement the NRS recommendations was a big factor in the Dexter Government losing the election in October of 2013.

But before that, the Bowater Mill closed in June of 2013, and a Buy Back the Mersey campaign, initiated by people in Rankin's corner of the woods spread broadly in NS and convinced the government to buy the land owned by Resolute Forest Products, so would it not fall into the wrong hands, so it would be used for conservation, and community forests and recreation and, yes, for some of the old school forestry.

220,000 hectares were Purchased in Dec of 2012.

That made a Total of Old Forest-rich 566,000 ha in the Western Crown Lands, the "last Great Wood basket of Nova Scotia".

The new Liberal Government however didn't waste time in continuing where Dexter & Co left off, making a secret deal with Northern Pulp in January of 2014 to increase its woods supply to 225,000 tonnes annually from 100,000. It was widely suspected that this would come from Western Nova Scotia.

In April of 2014, the new Liberal government hired Jon Porter - the very Jon Porter of the Porter report (then out of regular work with the closure of Bowater Mill) as Executive Director of DNR's Renewable Resources Branch.

That was followed by DNR setting up of a consortium of mills in the fall of 2014 – to become WestFor in 2016 – to harvest the Western Crown Lands.

And then the free-for all began, harvesting this last great wood basket in the most biodiversity rich and carbon storage rich area of NS, also the most inherently nutrient poor and the most susceptible to degradation by clearcutting.

Of course the plunder did not go unnoticed and with the public uproar, the Liberals announced an Independent Review of Forestry as a major plank in their successful re-election strategy in 2017.

They got back in we got the Lahey Review with things on hold while it was in process. But then after the report was released (Aug, 2018), the plunder again began, this time with Iain Rankin as Minister of Forestry. Again that generated more public uproar and we are where we are today...

So the trajectory since the Lahey report is a very familiar one, it's the same trajectory that followed the NRS, and ForestNS had a big role in it then and now a and so far we are seeing the same result: No change or minor change in the status quo with a lot of window dressing.

It's good news to hear that Jon Porter is finally retiring from L&F at end of this month, tomorrow I guess. But watch where he goes. The last company man to leave, Alan Eddy went to Port Hawkesbury Paper.

Mr. Rankin:

So now with that little bit of history, Mr, Premier, let me talk to you directly.

In brief Mr, Rankin, my message is You Need Us and We Need You.

You need us if you want to accomplish those laudable environmental goals you say you are committed to,

You need us because in the next election, your industrial forestry supporters won't be voting Liberal, they will voting for the party nipping at your heals, because it has catered to Big Forestry unequivocally through thick and thin including the Northern Pulp closure.

So that leaves us Mr, Premier.

And you know that. In the run-up to the election of a new leader, you/your campaign called pretty well every environmentally oriented person I known(I was called about 5 times) and a lot of them joined the Liberal party to vote for you, if they weren't members already.

I don't know whether that carried the day... but in a general election, there is no doubt that environment will matter big time, and that you now need to gain credibility, not make more promises.

That credibility will be based on what you are able to do in your remaining months in office.

And Mr. Premier, we need you. You remain right now our biggest hope for seeing real change in the way our government of whatever party makes the right decisions related to the dual and related threats of climate change and biodiversity loss. It is the simplest route. Make the tough decisions and we will support you.

But there is now a credibility problem, a big one, with your quick backtracking on the Biodiversity Act, Your Act Mr. Premier, in response to ForestNS's campaign of division and deception; and your refusal to date to implement a moratorium while we wait for the Lahey report to be fully implemented.

You have promised to implement Lahey before the next election, expected within a year.

But there are some big problems with implementing the Lahey report, especially in a hurry.

First we still have only a very vague idea of how it will be implemented; the big question is what will the HPF (High Production Forestry) component look like?

The discussion paper propositions from February 2020 were clearly excessive.

And we have seen not seen anything since. We have not seen the wood supply model and the assumptions it is based on. In particular we need to know whether there will be a substantial reduction in wood supply from crown lands, as Lahey and Co. expected but YOU said in December 2018 was not necessary.

If we don't see such a reduction Mr. premier, the results will be worse than what we have now. Clearcutting will be sanctioned on the best forested Crown lands remaining and the rest will be pocketed with holes and crisscrossed by roads as the system is pushed to produce the wood demanded by the Mills, all at public and nature's expense,

We also, Mr Premier, have heard nothing about the Old Forest Policy.

And nothing about the mysterious Environmental Assessment process that will dictate how public input is to occur.

For the Lahey process to work, to gather widespread support and to achieve what is intended to do, you can't push it out of the door on an election timeline.

In the meantime we will soon be three years since the Lahey Report was submitted and in our 12th year since the NRS.

That's why we need a moratorium.

The destruction of forested land has actually accelerated in the past year of Covid because of the change in the market and high lumber prices... Those have made the High Volume Old Forests of southwest Nova Scotia a prime target, the same forests that stores so much carbon and that are so valuable biodiversity-wise.

So there is a lot we are nervous about.

But it has been clear from the very beginning there should have been a moratorium on clear cutting - because of L&F's semantic tricks , we have to say a moratorium on clearcutting/even-aged management.

In fact L&F secretly floated significant reductions in Sept of 2018, within a month after Lahey report was handed in, but then quickly retracted them, all behind closed doors were it not for CBC opening a few of them up.

And McNeil, when his government announced the Independent Review, placed restrictions on harvesting by WestFor while the review was occurring and just coincidentally the election campaign was upcoming—but then, again secretly, removed them in a deal with Westfor on Oct 1, 2018 (I have always found the coincidence of that deal with the day a New NAFTA was agreed upon very curious).

So you know, you understand why a moratorium is needed, you/ the government of the day simply buckled under pressure from ForestNS & Co or assumed it was the way ahead strategically.

Now it's your turn Mr. Premier. And it is not just Jacob and us standing here asking for a moratorium. Half of the Advisory Committee for the Independent

Review, essentially the scientific half, broke ranks and called for the moratorium last winter.

So It should be an easy fix for you Mr. Premier

You don't need to do it for Jacob – well now it's too late, although it sure would have been be nice and a sign of respect to him and his generation just to talk to him.. but that is your decision Mr. premier and that was a political choice.

And you don't need to do it because we are all out here pleading you to do it.

**Mr. Premier, You need to do it simply because it is the right thing to do.
The right thing for forest, for your climate goals, for all of us.**

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*** A note added to the transcript: There was more going on than I have indicated. In 2010 after the Natural Resources Strategy recommendations were published, FPANS initiated a disinformation campaign amongst its members to discredit the recommendations and in particular the Bancroft and Crossland report. They told members that 'Many of the recommendations are impractical. They are not based on credible science and come from a few vocal people who would prefer to see our industry die...' and asked them to write Minister MacDonell and Premier Darrel Dexter and their local MLA.. View this Ecology Action Centre page for more details: [EAC Response to Forest Industry Campaign against Steering Panel Report](https://ecologyaction.ca/content/eac-response-forest-industry-campaign-against-steering-panel-report) (https://ecologyaction.ca/content/eac-response-forest-industry-campaign-against-steering-panel-report). Also view various related links, documents at <http://nsforestnotes.ca/perspectives/#Bancroft> (several items, scroll down)
